

A SKETCH OF MAJOR-GENERAL BUTLER.

From Our Own Correspondent.

BOSTON, May 28, 1861.

Benjamin Franklin Butler is a native of Deerfield, N. H., and was born on the 5th of November, 1818. I have seen it stated that he is of Irish descent, but as this is a very common claim, not much regard need be paid to it. His father's name was John Butler. He was a soldier or a seaman in the War of 1812. Mr. Butler came to Lowell when Butler was a boy. See was a woman of energy and ability, and I believe, kept a boarding-house for a living several years after she removed to Lowell. She is now in California. Butler attended the Lowell High School and the Academy at Exeter; graduated at Waterville College; studied law in the office of William Smith, a lawyer of no great ability and of rather poor reputation, who was admitted to the bar in 1810. He plunged immediately into law and politics, showing about as much bent on to one as the other, and, for a wonder, neglecting neither. I remember him in 1840 going into the neighboring towns and making Democratic speeches, for the use of a Democratic family, and has always adhered to the faith of his fathers.

He has a brother named Andrew Jackson Butler, and I conclude that there is not a drop of "Federal blood" in his veins. His speeches were smart, impudent, reckless, slap-dash affairs, showing the same general traits which have characterized him as a lawyer and politician ever since he began his career. He soon became a decided character in Lowell and Middlesex County. He made policies and law play into each other's hands, and while he denounced the agents and overseers of the mills as tyrants and oppressors, his office was open for the establishment of all sorts of law suits on behalf of the male and female operatives. I don't think he ever had any misgivings as to the result of a case upon which he had entered, or that he ever hesitated to espouse the cause of a client no matter how worthless the client or how desperate the cause. And he never abandoned his client, in victory or defeat. I believe Butler also dabbled a little in newspaper writing at this time, but he is a clumsy writer, and probably never could have attained much distinction in this line.

Gradually Butler worked himself out of the disreputable sort of practice at the bar which he had fallen into, and a better class of cases came to his share. His ability and success commanded wealthier and more respectable clients than at first, though he has never recurred, as far as I know, to practice in the Superior and Justice Courts, and to defend the most desperate and disreputable culprits. At the criminal terms of the Middlesex Court, he has, always, at least until very recently, done a greater amount of business than anybody else, and his reputation at present is that of the most successful criminal lawyer in the State. His devices and shiftings to obtain an acquittal and release are absolutely diabolical and innumerable. He is never daunted or baffled until the sentence is passed and put into execution and the reprieve, pardon, or commutation is refused. An indictment must be drawn with the greatest nicety, or it will not stand his criticism. A verdict of guilty is nothing to him; it is only the beginning of the case; he has fifty exceptions; a hundred motions in arrest of judgment; and after that the halibut corpus and personal replevin. The opposing counsel never begins to feel safe until the evidence is all in, for he knows what new dodges Butler may spring upon him. He is more fertile in expedients than any man who practices law among us. His expedients frequently fail, but they are generally plausible enough to bear the test of trial. And finally and weak as they often are, Butler always has confidence in them to the last; and when one fails, he invariably tries another. If it were not that there must be an end to everything, his desperate cases would never be finished, for there would be no end to his expedients to obtain a conviction. The story which has been lately published that he caused an attachment to be placed upon the water-wheel of one of the Lowell mills, at the suit of a factory girl—thus bothering the owners so that they were glad to settle the "bill" without delay, is probably true.

It is creditable to Butler that he stuck to the Democratic party so faithfully and for so many years, in a city where that party was perpetually in a minority. It was only by the aid of the Free-Soilers that he at last got into the Legislature. The "Coalition" had carried the city in 1822, but Butler was not on its ticket that year. The next year he was nominated by the Democrats and Free-Soilers. The first day's election resulted in the choice of a part of the ticket, but Butler and three others fell behind, and were defeated. On the second trial Butler was chosen, receiving just nine votes more than the required number. But the State was lost; Clifford was chosen Governor, and the Senate and House had small Whig majorities. Butler was the leader of the Constitutionalists in the House, and his battles with Ovis P. Lord, the Whig leader, are memorable in the history of legislative strife in this State. Never were two men more evenly matched. For the first time, and the last, a Convention of the two branches, which is an anomalous legislative proceeding, peculiarity, I think, to Massachusetts, was broken up without having effected its object, and Judge Warren, President of the Senate, was made to leave at the head of his associates, without having performed the errand which called them into the Representatives' Hall. But the dill of the Whigs was as perfect as that of their enemies, and finally it prevailed.

The election of delegates to the Constitutional Convention next came on; the Constitutionalists carried Lowell easily, and Butler was chosen. In this Convention he took an active part, and displayed greater ability and appreciation of principles than anywhere else. And he was as fertile in expedients as ever. The polished debates leave evidence of his industry and skill, and the votes exhibit his fidelity to the principles and measures of the majority of the Convention. The Convention was rejected by the people, and the Coalition was dead. Butler was always faithful to it, and loyally to his Free-Soil allies. When, in 1832, the Congressional contest came between Henry Wilson and Tappan Wentworth, Butler, though he did not formally withdraw from the field, gave important aid to Wilson, who was, however, defeated by ample majority, and reserved for the Senate three years later. The political fights in Lowell in 1832 and 1833 were the ugliest ever known in the State, and a crop of libertines grew out of them, in which Butler figured as plumbif, and I believe he got a verdict against Mr. Wm. L. Wood, then editor of *The Lowell Courier*, who had made a violent and unjustifiable attack upon him and his family.

The Coalition having failed to destroy the Whig party, though it dealt upon it mortal wounds, the Know-Nothing party arose in 1854, and enlisted it. Butler, to his credit be it said, fought this monstrous outgrowth of bigotry as valiantly as he had fought the Whigs. When Jno. Hiss and his Numerary Committee brought the Legislature of 1855 into contempt, and in self-defense the chief culprit had to be expelled, Butler appeared in his counsel, luxuriating in the opportunity to show up the follies of the new party. When Gardner disengaged the Irish companies, Butler resisted, and, after his commission as Colonel was taken away, went to law, and prosecuted the Adjutant-General for taking the guns from the army, with no satisfactory result, however. Three or four years later he appeared with John A. Andrew w. as counsel for George P. Burnham, and carried before the Supreme Court the question whether the imprisonment of Burnham by the House, for contempt, was legal—again with no result satisfactory to him or his client. But these persistent efforts illustrate his dogged pertinacity, and his fertility in expedients of which I have already spoken. I doubt whether any controversy can be raised which Butler cannot, by hook or by crook, get into the Supreme Court for hearing and argument. If he cannot institute a suit in before his cause comes home again, he will institute a suit in before his cause comes home again. He is a man of infinite resource, and I believe his domestic relations are exceedingly pleasant and enviable. He is a hospitable man, fond of spending money as well as of making it, and free-hearted and liberal without being extravagant. He is a warm-blooded and impulsive man, combative, persistent in every sort of enterprise or controversy in which he may be engaged, loving the "rapture of the strife" quite as much as desiring the fruits of the victory. Gen. Butler has a great responsibility, and he has in a large degree the confidence of the people of the State, who know that he is loyal and courageous, and what is of equal consequence, in the full vigor of life and amply endowed with brains.

As an orator, Butler is forcible and effective, but not eloquent. He never rises into the region of sentiment, and so will leave no species which will live. His appeals to the jury and to the cause are sharp, sanguine, and when he is on the right side powerful. When he is on the wrong side, he brings his resources to bear with equal vigor, and apparently without any reluctance, appeals to unworthy passions and base feelings of his auditors. He is no humanitarian, yet his best appeals have been in favor of misused seamen or Irish boys. If in politics I must still style him a Hunter Democrat, I cannot close him in any respect with the genus Fog, for no man has less of the Fog element. He despises that class of our fellow-citizens who, clothing themselves in autocratic dressing gowns, and placing their feet in medieval slippers, sit comfortably down to their toast and *Concord*, and right for the good old days of Gen. Gage, and are equally disgusted when they hear of a revolution in Italy and a popular movement at home. There is hope of a man who

"Belives in freedom's cause."

As things come out right, he will believe in the same cause nearer home. Butler is already making decided progress in the matter of fugitive slaves, which our reporter noticed on Tuesday, and

treated; and, as Butler probably has a little leisure time, I recommend that it be placed in his hands. If he occupies Richmond, perhaps he can get a favorable judgment from the Virginia Court, with exemplary damages.

LOCAL MILITARY MATTERS.

MILITARY AND NAVAL MOVEMENTS.

The organization of the 11th and 12th Infantry, and their enrollment on the books of the regular army of the United States, makes it consist of 24 full regiments, instead of 19, as heretofore. The military force of regiments, therefore, at present, is as follows: 12 regiments of Infantry, 4 of Artillery, 1 of Mounted Riflemen, and 2 of Dragoons. The commission of the officers transferred with the volunteers have been made out, given to them, and registered.

Brigadier-General McDowell, who has been detailed for the command of the new military department just laid out by the War Department, is commanding young officer, having originally entered the service July 1, 1858. He is a native of Ohio, and a graduate of the Acad. my. His first commission was 1st Lt. of a Cavalry. He was a Cavalier, an Anti-Corporal, a friend of Free Sojers—in a word, a Democrat. So they contrived to get Ex-Gov. Bragge into the field on an Anti-Free School seat, and voted for him. In 1860 came the split in the Democratic party, and Gen. Butler played a very prominent part in the Conventions at Charleston and Baltimore. With his usual pluck and audacity, he told the slaveholders some very plain truths, and on the question of the platform fought them with ability and skill. The history of these conventions is fresh in all men's minds. To the surprise of all except those who were in the Convention, Gen. 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